

THE FORUM THEATRE AS A MEDIUM OF EXPRESSION OF EMOTION BY MALAY ADOLESCENTS IN MALAYSIA: A CASE STUDIES OF THE TWO REHABILITATION CENTERS IN MELAKA AND KOTA KINABALU

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ABSTRACT

What is the Theatre of the Oppressed? In a general terms, 'oppressed' means 'done badly by', 'experience injustice', and 'be unfairly treated'. Oppression in the context of Theatre of the Oppressed is not an exclusively physical phenomenon, or to be resolved in physical terms. It is not the same as aggression which depends on physical strength. Oppression is defined as a power dynamic based on monologue rather than dialogue; a relation of domination and command that prohibits the oppressed from being who they are and from exercising their basic human rights. It is about a person who has lost the right to express his or her will and needs, and is reduced to the condition of an obedient listener to a monologue. Oppression is very often interiorised, but the oppressed can still liberate themselves by involving in discussion and voicing their problems. In the context of theatre, Boal defines 'Theatre of the Oppressed' as a participatory form based not on the classical notion of performance "spectacle" but on the creation of a forum to analyze, discuss, and explore group solutions to injustice (Arendt.C:1996.Vol.40 [2])

KEYWORDS: Experience Injustice, Theatre of the Oppressed, Drama Therapy.

INTRODUCTION

Theatre of the Oppressed is a form of popular theatre, of, by, and for people engaged in the struggle for liberation. It is a rehearsal theatre designed for people who want to learn ways of fighting back against oppression in their daily lives. Theatre of the Oppressed is about acting rather than talking, questioning rather than giving answers, analysing rather than accepting (Boal.1992:xxiv). The theatre performance should involve 'dialogue' with the audience and not a 'one-way street talking' as happened in the conventional or realistic theatre where an intransitive relationship took place; everything travels from stage to auditorium, emotions, ideas and even morality is transferred in that direction and nothing goes the other way. By contrast, in the Theatre of the Oppressed, dialogue is created; transitivity is not merely tolerated but it is actively encouraged. Theatre of the Oppressed is a transitive relationship where the actor does not only deliver his speech but the audience too have to respond to what they have seen and heard. It is a two way street. The theatre asks its audience questions and expects answers (Boal.1998:20). All human beings have the desire and need to communicate and when there is no existence of communication, the oppression ensues

Theatre of the Oppressed is a politicised theatre with a difference: not playwright dominated socially and or politically, but an event where the “*spect-actor*”, literally remakes the world (Lavender. 1995:32). The key aspect of the Theatre of the Oppressed is the re-positioning of the actor-audience relationship so that there would be no division between the actors and the spectators. It invites the spectators to contribute by getting up themselves and trying out their own ideas: they see a character, they see their problem, they see themselves defeated by the problem and they should do something about it.

Boal sees theatre as a very efficient weapon for liberation (Boal.2000: ix). Theatre is not only for entertainment but also a medium for social change. Theatre of the Oppressed is a participatory style for of theatre. It is based not on the classic notion of the performance “spectacle” but on the creation of a forum. It should analyze, discuss and explore group solutions to injustice. No trained actors involve but the public, to feel motivated to script and act in Boal’s form of theatre. The problems portrayed in the Theatre of the Oppressed are generated from the audience’s everyday experience. Boal purposefully does not impose a definition of oppression from a particular ideological perspective, but accepts for the scene what the audience itself perceives as oppressive. In keeping with his desire to empower the “audience”, everyone is encouraged to take part in the brief scenarios that are played out. For Boal, theatre is “the art of looking at ourselves...All human beings are Actors (they act!) and Spectators (they observe!). They Are Spect-actors.” (Boal. 1992:xxx).

Although the Theatre of the Oppressed is facilitated by someone who knows the structural forms of the theatre, and who can promote discussion, there is no artistic director involved and anyone can suggest changes in the way a scene is played. The audience not only comments on the action, it intervenes directly in the action, taking the protagonist’s part and trying to bring the play to a different conclusion. It is a kind of social therapy where people (audience) are not just watching the play but are also encouraged to participate in the play and give ideas and solutions to the problems. The audience is no longer a passive receiver; it is a gathering of ‘spect-actor’ (active spectators) who bring their own experience and suggestions to the question, ‘*What is to be done?*’ In other words, each person is responsible for his or her actions and when problems arise, everyone should participate in finding possible ways of solving the problems and not merely rely on the authorities, politician or academics to come up with the answers.

THE CATEGORIES OF THEATRE OF THE OPPRESSED

Boal has divided the Theatre of the Oppressed into five categories which are related to each other: Image Theatre, Invisible Theatre, Forum Theatre, Rainbow of Desire and Legislative Theatre. Forum Theatre is a theatrical game in which a problem is shown in an unsolved form, to which the spect-actor is invited to suggest and enact solutions. The problem is always the symptom of oppression and involves a group of oppressors and a protagonist as the oppressed. In its purest forms, both the actors and spect-actors will be people who are victims of the oppression (Boal. 1992: xxi). That is why they are able to offer alternative solutions, because they themselves are personally involved with and experienced the

oppression. Forum Theatre is an energising, interactive form which engages the audience in a theatricalised debate with the actors and with each other in an attempt to look at issues of oppression in a wide variety of situations and with a diverse range of participants. It is intended to be a rehearsal for real life, offering people a range of practical strategies for living.

THE FORM OF FORUM THEATRE

Forum Theatre is a form of 'contest' between spect-actors trying to bring the play to a different end in which the cycle of oppression is broken and actors (antagonists) who are making every possible effort to bring it to its original end in which the oppressed is beaten and the oppressors are triumphant (Boal.1992:xxi). The proceeding is guided or facilitated by a person called the 'Joker' whose function is to ensure the flow of the game and teach the audience the rules. The Joker too can be replaced by any spect-actors if s/he is not acting fairly. The rules of the games can be changed or altered if the audience wish according to their own custom and culture. Many different solutions can be enacted in the course of a single forum. Forum theatre was never about simplification into right and wrong, nor was it a didactic theatre. Forum is about what a roomful of people believes at a particular moment in time, and what one roomful of people believes is not necessarily the same as what the next roomful will believe. People see or feel the problem from a different perspective depends on their experience in life. The focus point of Forum Theatre is not only trying to solve a problem, but, also to make people more aware of a problem, see a problem from different perspectives and make the people realizes that there are ways of dealing with that problem (Boal.1995:xix).

THE DRAMATURGY OF FORUM THEATRE

In order to make sure the effectiveness of the Forum Theatre, we need to understand the elements of the Forum Theatre.

THE FUNCTIONS OF ACTORS

The Forum Theatre demands a lot of improvisation, spontaneity, creativity, imagination and sometimes innovation. Creativity and spontaneity is of paramount importance for actors in a Forum Theatre (Boal.1992:237). In their performances there must not be the slightest trace of the vanity that is so commonly found in ordinary theatre performances, because the presentation of the anti-model should express doubt. Each action and phrase should contain its own falsity of proposition which can open the possibility of saying the opposite of what is being performed. Any theatrical style is permissible if it serves the objective of the forum. The actors must have physical styles of playing, which successfully articulate their characters' ideology, work, social function, and profession (Boal.1992:19). The actor does not "become" the character as in the Stanislavskian approach to acting, rather actors "demonstrate" the characters' attitude while retaining freedom to comment on the actions of the person whose behaviour they are displaying. The actors too must try to interpret all the characters, not just focus on his or her character only, which means that every actor must not only concentrate on his/her character, but must give the same amount of time to studying the other characters as well (Boal.1992:19). This effort was

made to avoid giving the same actor the same role twice because the distribution of roles was made in each scene. Furthermore by directing the actors to reverse roles, thereby lessening their identification with their character and facilitating deeper understanding of the other character.

During the forum, actors must be extremely dialectical, creative and must be spontaneous in terms of encountering the spect-actors (Boal.1992:237). When they take up the counter-stance against a spect-actor/protagonist who wants to break the oppression, they must show that the oppression is not so easily defeated. They must show the difficulties, which will appear, while retaining a manner which encourages the spect-actor to break the oppression. This means that, while still countering every phase and action, they must awaken the spect-actor to other stances, other approaches. Not only that, the actor should know when to 'withdraw'. While impeding the attempt to break the oppression, they should rouse the spect-actor to achieve it. It is very important to remember that if the actor is too firm, which is quite common with professional actors, he or she may discourage and frighten the spect-actor. On the other hand, if the actor is too soft and vulnerable it can mislead the spect-actor into believing that the problem posed by the play is easier to resolve than he or she thought (Boal.1992:237). Boal compared the actors to an iceberg effect:

On the sea, only 10% of the iceberg is visible- that's what we show of the character.

However there is 90% of the iceberg below – that's the larger part of the character, which is only shown when necessary; the actor playing this part must know that 90% of what he might do if pressed. (Boal in Johnston C, 1998: 239).

Actors must know how to give and take and how to hold back and lead on. They must not fear losing their place as performers since what the forum theatre wants is the active response and the feedback from the spect-actors.

THE PROTAGONIST

The protagonist (the oppressed) represents a concrete character from reality. This is the only function in which a perfect and permanent link between actors and the character takes place. A single actor portrays a single protagonist. Here empathy occurs. There are several requirements in carrying out this function, for which the actor can make use of the Stanislavskian interpretation (Boal.1970:93). The actor cannot perform more than what the character would do as a human being. He must behave like a character; have the outlook of the character and not the actor's. His existence is never interrupted even though the Joker may be analyzing some detail of the play by interviewing him, he will respond like a character from the play (Boal.1970:93). He is the "slice of life", the living documentary and the real thing. The protagonist does not coincide necessarily with the main character. The actor who plays the role of protagonist does not have to be exactly like the person in real life. It will be much better if the characters' personalities are presented in a comic or in a satirical way because telling or showing people about their own weaknesses and problems is a serious matter, and sometimes it can be hurtful.

THE SPECT-ACTOR

Spect-actor is a Boal coinage to describe a member of the audience who takes part in the action in any way. The spect-actor is an active spectator as opposed to the passivity normally associated with the role of audience member. `Spect-actor' comes from two different words: *spectator* is a person who sits and watches an activity without taking part, and *actor* is someone who pretends to be someone else while performing in film, theatrical performance, or television or radio program. In this case, the `spect-actor' means someone or somebody among the audience who intervenes in an unresolved scenario onstage to try to break a depicted cycle of oppression (the play) (Boal.1992:xxiv). A spect-actor can replace an actor and sometimes modify the character but he must respect the `givens' of the problem. He cannot change the given social circumstances of the problem. He cannot alter the familial relationships between characters, the ages, the economic status, which condition their actions. If these factors are adjusted, the solutions will be no use because they will apply to cases which have nothing to do with those proposed in the model. Secondly, he can only change the characteristics of the motivation not the character's motivation. However, in order to make the Forum Theatre successful, the background of the spect-actors needs to be clarified. The spect-actors must come from the same background or culture or share the same problems and be familiar with the situation that being presented. Otherwise, the spect-actors will never involve themselves in the forum.

THE CHORUSES / THE CORYPHEUS

The chorus are divided in two which are the *deuteragonist* and *antagonist*. The deuteragonist performs the role supporting the protagonist, as Boal said as the "good" chorus (Boal. 2000: 182). While the other, the antagonist, represents adversary roles or a "bad" chorus. Each one has its own coryphaeus. The chorus may substitute for the Joker, for example, when the Joker is playing the protagonist (Boal.1970:93). The choruses do not have a fixed number of actors and they may vary from one episode to another.

THE COSTUME

There will be two types of costumes; the basic one relating to the function and the chorus to which the function belongs. Another costume related not to each character but to the different social roles that he will perform during the conflict of the play. Only one costume will be allowed for each social role. If there are two or more actors performing the same role on stage at the same time, then the costume must be such that it can be used by a number of actors simultaneously and that allows the public to identify visually all the actors who perform the same role. The characters should be recognizable by the clothes they wear and the objects they use (Boal.1992:235). Very often oppression is reflected in clothes, in things. Objects and dress should be real, charged, clear and stimulating. The more care that is taken over the aesthetics of the show, the more it will stimulate, and the more the audience will take part. This has a connection with the dramatic personae where a spect-actor in his or her character's costume feels more protected. He is much freer and more creative. However, the most important thing is, the costumes must be easy for the spect-actors to get in and out of, with minimum fuss.

THE CHORAL ORCHESTRA

Music has the power, independent of the concepts, to prepare the audience in an immediate way, imaginatively, for the reception of simplified texts which can only be absorbed through the experience reason (Boal.2000:170). The basic instruments suggested by Boal are guitar, flute and percussion (Boal.1970:93). The musicians can also have to play other instruments. These can be any kind of musical instrument and depends on the society and cultural influences. Besides musical support, the orchestra also sing, alone or together with the coryphaeus, all the comments of an informative or imaginative nature. Sometimes it also functions to help the Joker to demonstrate (Boal.1970:93).

THE JOKER SYSTEM

In the context of Forum Theatre, the joker is the person who acts as intermediary between audience and performers, and is attached to no one party (Boal1992:xxiv). The Joker is the most powerful `character' in the forum theatre system. He is not only a facilitator but he is a difficultator (Boal.1995:xix). He is the only one that can perform any role in the play, even to replace the protagonist when the latter's realistic portrayal prevents him from plausibly doing something.

Table 1. The Joker's Structure of Performance

Joker's Functions	The Description of tasks	Elaboration
The Dedicator	He opens the play with an introductory explanation. He presents the cast, the author, the technique utilized and objectives of the play. During the closing, he informs the audience the theme dealt with in each play.	It can be a song, a poem or a recited text.
The Clarifier	Explains the point of views of those presenting the play. It can undo some scenes, correct them, bringing in others which do not appear in the original text to achieve greater clarity.	Written in prose. It can utilize any resources; slides, film, maps, newspaper
The Commentator	Connecting the episodes. He explains the audiences the change of each scene presented.	Written in Rhymes versus or poetry.
The Interviewer	To reveal to the audience the true state of mind of a character. He is the bridge between the character and the audience. The audience can ask questions directly to the character.	Stop the action momentarily and asks the character questions the audience wants answer.

The Joker too, has the power to `make believe' by allowing the audience to see and not merely look. This ability is known the *Joker scenography*. If they look at an actual telephone on stage, they won't see a telephone; but if they can see an object representing the absent telephone, then they will see

the absent phone. The Joker scenography should deliver the spect-actor to a reality which is not present, except symbolically. With this ability, the forum will not depend on theatrical spectacular; a huge setting or set decoration.

THE RULES OF THE JOKER

The Joker is the heart of the Forum Theatre. The actor who takes part as a Joker can display his or her own personality and behave differently in front of the spectator. However, there are certain rules that a Joker must bear in mind and obey. These rules can be modified or changed depending on the situation and culture. However, they still contain certain elements, which are almost obligatory. The Joker must realize that his or her function is just as a facilitator who presides over the flow of the forum (Boal.1992:232). S/he personally decides nothing. S/he can only spell out the rules of the games, which still can be altered by spect-actors if the rules seem inappropriate to the situation or the treatment of the proposed subject. The Joker too, must avoid any actions that could manipulate or influence the audience. S/he should not draw any conclusions, which are not self-evident. S/he must always open the possible conclusions to debate, stating them in an interrogative rather than an affirmative form. The Joker must not give his or her personal interpretation of events. S/he must always be relaying doubts back to the audience so that they can make the decisions. The Joker him/herself must know and understand the culture and the society they are dealing with.

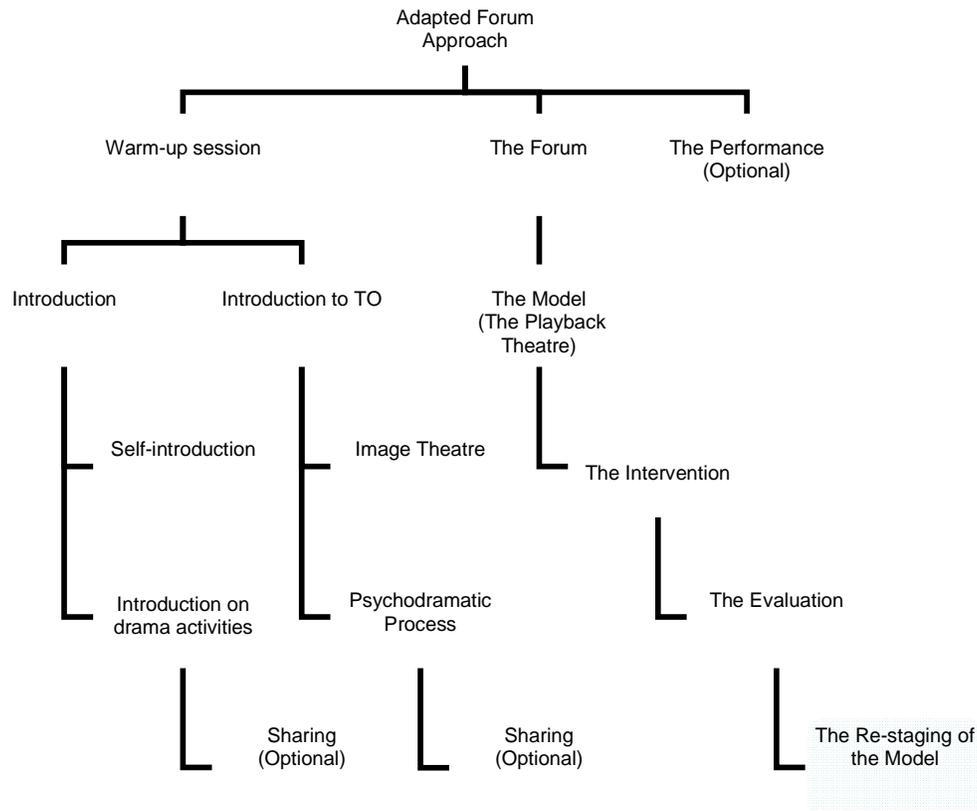
The physical stance of the Joker is extremely important (Boal.1992:234). Some Jokers are tempted to mix with the audience or to sit with other spect-actors, which can be completely demobilizing. Others would prefer to be onstage. This is a bit dangerous since the condition of the Jokers is too visible. If the Joker on stage is tired or confused s/he will transmit a tired and disorientated image to the audience. Finally, and of most vital importance, is that the Joker must be dialectical. S/he must help the spect-actors to gather their thoughts, to prepare their actions. In other words, the Joker is a midwife where he must assist the birth of all ideas and actions (Boal.1992:234).

APPLICATION OF FORUM THEATRE TECHNIQUE IN MALAYSIA.

Due to the lack of useful written or recorded reference especially on the actual process of the Forum approach, the concept of the Forum workshop in Malaysia had to be constructed based on the researcher's basic understanding of the Forum technique after reading books which can only be found either in libraries in the United Kingdom or through electronic resources such as internet sources. The constructed approach has been tested and applied with troubled teenagers in two rehabilitation centers in Malacca and Kota Kinabalu. Due to that several other therapeutic processes have been adapted in conducting the Forum Theatre workshops suitable for the Malaysian context. The therapeutic processes used are taken from two major approaches, Psychodrama and Playback Theatre. To simplify the understanding on the new adjustments and modifications of the approach are described in **Table 2**. The model is determined by several things such as the needs, abilities, and limitations of the participants, the researcher's interests and training, and the limitations of the space provided. The new adapted approach is divided into three general phases; The first phase is The Warm-ups, consist of two inter-related

sections. The first section is the self-introduction and the introduction to drama activities; and the second section is the Introduction to the Theatre of the Oppressed which consists of two inter-related activities; Image Theatre and the Psychodramatic Processes.

Table 2. The Constructed Approach Appropriate for the Malaysian Context.



The second phase is The Forum Activities which consists of three stages. The first stage is the Model, the Intervention session and finally, the Evaluation session. The third and final phase is The Performances consist of two stages of performances which are the re-staging of the Model and the Model of Action for the Future.

THE PROCESS OF THE FORUM THEATRE

In terms of application the process of the Forum Theatre approach is slightly difference from the original introduced by Boal. The constructed approach has been successfully tested and applied with troubled teenagers in two different states; Malacca and Kota Kinabalu. Despite all the problems that are occurred as a result of the traditional customs which have developed an inferiority complex among the Malays, the adapted approach used in the workshop successfully encouraged the inmates to express their emotions and feelings of dissatisfaction.

THE FIRST PHASE: THE WARM-UP SESSION

The first phase is The Warm-ups, consist of two inter-related sections. The first section is the self-introduction and the introduction to drama activities. The reason for some lack of response by the inmates was that the company members did not understand the culture of the community. To conduct a workshop in Sabah for example, needs a lot of research and it is a very time-consuming compared to conducting one in Melaka. The culture and society in Sabah are much more complicated. Sabah is known as a multi-ethnic state. There are Bajau, Kadazan, Brunai, Jawa, and Suluk. These communities are known as Bumiputra (the son of the soil) and each ethnic group has its own adat and ways of living which must be respected. Meanwhile in Peninsular Malaysia, the division of races is not as complicated as in the East Malaysia. There are only three major races, which are the Malays, Chinese and Indian. The culture, is multi-racial and various social beliefs between community in the West and East Malaysia are visibly different. It is very dangerous to ignore the sensitivity of each race. Language barriers sometimes caused problems between the two groups. Even though they speak the dialect versions of the same language (Malay), there are still irregularities in terms of vocabulary and several other linguistic discrepancies. It was not easy for one such defined group, such as university student-performers from West Malaysia, who are all Malays, educationally successful, and with secure backgrounds, to lead a workshop with another defined group in Sabah that came from a multi-racial society, from a less developed area, and is made up of members who have been labelled as 'failures' by their community. As the company do not have this knowledge and understanding of other societies, they were unable to 'invite' the audience to intervene in the play and the transitive response was not happening. The Forum workshop became more like a chat show where people offered verbal solutions to a problem based on their own experiences and understanding. In order to invite interventions from the inmates, the company members needed to be able to put themselves in the inmates' shoes. Research must be done on the culture of the targeted community. Frances Babbage points out that a well-researched Forum must be presented to a well-chosen audience and the practitioner must ensure that the material used is both immediately relevant and effectively mediated:

...the willingness to do this is dependent upon having themselves 'felt like that' at some time in their own lives. If the spectators cannot identify with the protagonist, they will struggle to replace her effectively (2004: 45).

Boal himself has conducted a vast amount of research with the help of his theatre group, Centro do Teatro do Optimido, whose members were mostly local people and who had spent years in the area. They spent a great deal of time in different areas and the data collected was gathered and discussed among themselves at the Centre of Theatre of the Oppressed (CTO) in Rio.

Any kind of activities and theatre games can be explored. This is part of an ice-breaking session among the group members. The activity will help to develop teamwork and improve self-respect among them. By developing these characteristics only then the next step can be done.

The second section is the Introduction to the Theatre of the Oppressed which consists of two inter-related activities; Image Theatre and the Psychodramatic Processes. The group members should be told the general background of the Theatre of the Oppressed, its function and the purpose of having a workshop. Again, to make the workshop more interesting and accessible, such information on the aims and functions of the Theatre of the Oppressed, and also explanations about the rules of the game can be interspersed throughout the games and exercises. Exercise known as Image Theatre uses the human body as a tool of representing feelings, ideas and relationships. They will discover how to use their bodies or those of others in sculpting to create anything from one person to large group image sculptures that reflect the sculptor's impression of a situation or oppression. There should be no verbal expression. Several kinds of Image Theatre can be used depending on the surroundings, culture and the perception of the inmates. They will depict a real life dilemma, which in its unresolved form is recognized by the group as oppressive. They should describe several situations using their own bodies. They must sculpt their bodies and form several images, which they think relate to the subject matter. Some exercises which are simple and not embarrassing can arouse the least resistance.

According to the previous experiences in Melaka and Sabah, the self-reliance, confidence and frankness among the inmates were very low. The secluded and rigid environment in the centre has affected the ability to act and the ability to think among the inmates. Feelings of distrust and suspicion are obviously seen among them. These problems became part of the reasons of the ineffectiveness of the Forum approach conducted in the last workshops. To cope with the problems a few therapeutic processes taken from the psychodrama technique have been adapted to the previous Forum workshop. The first therapeutic activity is *Doubling* and can be played by one or more group members. The double is a mind/feeling reader. He or she is a person whose role is to tune into the enactor's unexpressed thoughts and feeling and express them. The double is the enactor's hidden voice, one's truest self (Garcia.2000:186). The double helps the enactor to realize and acknowledge what she is thinking and feeling. Another appropriate technique that enables the inmates to express their feelings or emotions in a safe way is the *Role-reversal*. The Role-reversal technique is believed to have many purposes and can be useful in coping with the culture of silence in Malaysia. Role-reversal is a special approach to bring hidden processes to the surface. Role-reversal partly comes about through imitation, and partly by exploration. Role-reversal is the process by which the protagonist temporarily becomes someone or something else by adopting the position, characteristics and behaviour of the other. Role reversal also enables the protagonist to see the world from the perspective of the other person or to put it in layman's terms "to be in someone else's shoes"; 'They see themselves from the other person's perspectives' (Kellerman. 1992:90). In the previous workshop in Melaka, the inmates could not and did not know how to express their emotions of dissatisfaction. The traditional social system which has created the culture of silence has affected the Malay adolescent and made them oppressed. Most of them expressed their anger and frustration by hurting themselves; cutting their wrists using sharp things such as knives and broken glass. Although this phenomenon is normally occurred among inmates in the rehabilitation centres and other prison settings in Malaysia but by introducing a special kind of approach hopefully it can become a

medium for the inmates to express their emotion of dissatisfaction. A suggestion to deal with the problem is by using the *The Empty Chair* activity. An empty chair can be placed before the group. The group leader asks the group members to imagine that someone or something is in the chair. Then he asks them to make a statement to who ever is in it. They may stand behind the chair or may speak to him from their seats, giving him advice. One of the values of empty chair work is that one does not get a negative feedback or response that one gets from a human being. Therefore, people can often express themselves more fully than when confronted with a threatening person. Once they feel more comfortable expressing their feelings in this way, it is easier to do so with people.

At the end of the session there should be a closing session where the group members sit together in a circle and share their feelings and emotions towards the activity they have undertaken together. The session is called *The Sharing*. Sharing is a time for relating personal experiences and associations related to the enactment and the whole-group experience. This is a time for self-reflection. It is not the time for analysis of the action, of what the protagonist did or did not do or say. This is the province of processing or supervision. If analysis of the process begins, it is vital for the group leader to intervene by telling or reminding the group of the task of sharing- sharing the identifications and promoting group interaction and process. Useful expression can also happen non-verbally for example through a glance, squeezing the others' hand or by an embrace. This action may help the words to come and facilitate the process of verbal sharing. Just by holding a group member who has been profoundly moved can give him/her a sense of containment. Containment and holding is a primary task of the group process and can provide the necessary phase of integration of inner strength before further exploration. In the researcher's personal point of view, a non verbal sharing can feel comforting, welcoming and warm. However, this non-verbal sharing activity is not a compulsory to be implemented. It depends on the culture, participants and their relationships with others.

THE SECOND PHASE

The second phase is the *Forum*, which consists of three stages, the *Model*, the *Intervention* and the *Evaluation*. At this level we need to make sure that the group members are already familiar with the Forum technique. The first stage in this phase is the presentation of the *model*. In the original version of Forum, with the help of the Joker, the participants write a loosely scripted plan of action in which the protagonist badly wants something that an antagonists thwarts. It is very important that the model should be based on a story agreed by the majority of the audience. The audience can choose any character they wish to appear on stage. Later, the actors will try to act out the scene once. The show is presented as if it were a conventional play. A certain image of the world is presented (Boal.1992:19). However, the approach has been modified. The Playback technique was successfully used in performing the model. The issue or the problem identified must be shared by most of the participants and the Playback can focus on that issue. One volunteer from the group will tell the stories based on an issue which has been agreed by the majority of the members. The volunteer will tell the story to the group based to the questions asked by the Joker/Conductor and soon after he has finished, the Joker/Conductor will asks

him or her to choose actors to play the key roles. The interview ends and the Joker/Conductor explains the storyline or the plot to the audience before the performance begins. This is to make sure that the audience know in advance the issue focused on in the scene and for the actors to understand and prepared for the enactment. Then, the Joker/Conductor hands the story over to the actors with an injunction: "Let's watch!". It will be more interesting if the opening begins with a song sung spontaneously by the Joker/Conductor. There is no discussion. The actors silently position themselves for the opening of the scene. To understand more on the Joker's functions please refer to **Table 1**. During the enactment, the Joker/Conductor and the protagonist watch from the side. When the scene is over, the actors pause in place. The Joker/Conductor invites the volunteered participant to comment. If the enactment was not true enough to the essence of the story to satisfy him/her, the Joker/Conductor may ask the actors to redo some or all of it, incorporating his/her corrections. The scene can be repeated several times until s/he feels that the actors have presented the proper 'reality' of oppression. The duration of time length of the performance should be less than half an hour.

Before the intervention session begins, the group must be briefed again on the rules and the structure of the activity. They must be informed about their role in terms of contribution, interaction and intervention. The mode of the presentation will be changed from 'a one way street' to 'a two-way street'. Instead of sitting passively and watching the play, the audience must become active, intervene and contribute ideas for solving the problem. Contribution of ideas should not be done verbally but have to be followed by action because that what makes the Forum Theatre different from any ordinary theatre. After the model has been presented, the audience are then told that the play is going to be performed for the second time, exactly like the first one but a little bit faster. The actors will try to bring the piece to the same end as before, and at this level the audience are encouraged to change it, showing that new solutions are possible and valid. In other words, the actors stand for a particular *vision of the world* and will try to maintain that the world as it is and ensure that things go exactly the same way until an audience intervenes and changes the vision of the world *as it is* into the world *as it could be* (Boal.1992:19-20). The audience is informed by the Joker, that the first step is to take the protagonist's place whenever s/he makes a mistake, in order to try to bring about a better solution. All they have to do is approach the playing area and shout 'Stop!' Immediately the actors must stop where they are without changing position (Boal.1992:20). The audience must say where he or she wants the scene taken from. The actors then will start the scene again from the prescribed point, with the audience member, which is now known as the spect-actor, as protagonist. The actor who has been replaced does not immediately retire from the game but he or she would stay on the sidelines as a coach or supporter and encourage the spect-actor and correct him or her if s/he start to go wrong. From the moment at which the spect-actor replaces the protagonist and begins to put forward a new solution, all the other actors transform themselves into agents of oppression or if they already were agents of oppression, they will intensify their oppression, to show the protagonist (spect-actor) how difficult it is to change reality (Boal.1992:20). The spect-actor is trying to find a new solution, trying to change the world; meanwhile the actors are trying to maintain and uphold the situation as it was and force them to accept the status quo. However the

important thing in this forum is not to find a winner but to learn and to train. The spect-actors, by acting out their ideas, train for 'real-life' action and actors and audience alike, by playing, learn the possible consequences of their actions. They learn the arsenal of the oppressors and the possible ways and tactics of the oppressed. If the spect-actor gives in, then the actor will take up the role again and the piece will rapidly head back to the original or towards the already known ending. Another spect-actor can then approach the stage and stop the play and say where he or she wants the play taken from, and the play will start again from that point. A new solution will be explored (Boal.1992:21). To create an intervention, the activity must be done only with the group involved. The existence of any outsiders will jeopardise the understanding and the trust that has developed among the group members.

As the workshop is drawn to a close, there should be a session known as the *evaluation session*. This activity is taken from the method of psychodrama;

Give truth and receive truth; give love to the group and it will return love to you; give spontaneity and spontaneity will return (Moreno.1953:114).

The evaluation session is a vital element of the process. Without it, there is no real learning and no awareness of transformation. Evaluation consolidates what has been learnt. Evaluation is also part of the outcome where the participants can see their mistakes and be able to learn from them. The evaluation session is seen as a must because the group have undertaken the training; they have applied their skills and run the workshop in various settings. They are in a different place to where they set out from, with skills and experiences. They need to look back at where they have come from, and see how far they have come and what changes they have made. In other words, they need to reflect on their experiences, and evaluate what they have learnt and achieved. The group need to be reminded that all the values and skills they have learned from the workshop are very valuable lessons for their future lives. Evaluation can be done in a number of ways either by using a traditional method like the use of an evaluation form or a verbal sharing where the group reassembles in a circle.

THE THIRD PHASE

When the forum is over; when the antagonists have been defeated and the problem has been solved or the solution has been accepted by most participants, the Joker proposes that a 'model of action for the future' be constructed. It is the final result or the best solutions achieved from the forum, where all or most of the audiences have agreed and are satisfied at that moment in time. This model of action for the future will be played out by the group of spect-actors (Boal.1992:21). One thing that has to be kept in mind is that, the word 'over' does not mean that the forum theatre must reach a solution, as long as the forum itself gathers a range of information and ideas relating to the solution to the problem, and the spect-actors agree to the outcome, then the forum can be considered complete. The forum play does not have to provide the answer. In fact, it is best if it does not – the more answers it provides, the less chance there is for audience participation (Schutzman M & Cohen-Cruz J.1994:36). It is not very important whether at its end the forum reaches a solution or not. Even if it does reach a solution, it may be good for the person who has proposed it, or good within the confines of the debate, but not necessarily

useful or applicable for all the participants in the forum. The most important thing to achieve is a good debate, because what provoke the spect-actors into entering into the game are the discussion and not the solution which may or may not be found. As Boal said in the interview with Aleks Sierz (1995) in the article *How to Play Boal*; “people discover needs they didn’t think they had”.

In the third phase (Forum Performances), the mode of presentation will be different. The concept of presentation and space will be transformed from a workshop basis into a more structured performance. There will be two types of performance. The first is the restaging of the *model* by the members of the company, and the second is the performance of the *model action of the future* by the group members. The play will be performed as a one-act play on a proscenium or raised stage. The play will be performed in front of a general audience. However, in these two performances there will never be any intervention. This is crucial as the participants are not ready to be judge or questions by any outsiders on their action onstage. The issue and the solution presented in the play has been agreed by the participants’ during the workshop and audience must respect that outcome. The idea of having the performance is to give the public audience a chance to see the actual process of transformation that occurred during the Forum workshop. They can make the comparison between the two performances; the same plot but with different ending, and how the issue is going through a process of ‘dismantling’, developing and is finally transformed from *the model* to become *the model of action for the future*.

BASIC REMINDERS!

One must understand the Forum process before implementing the approach. Nevertheless, to understand that alone is not enough. There are several fundamental issues that need to be understood before one can proceed to use the Forum Theatre approach. Forum Theatre can only be done if there is a problem or an issue to discuss. It is important for a group to decide what the central idea is, what is the subject of the play and the subsequent forum is to be. The tendency of many communities is to include in the play everything that they can remember about the event. The result of this is that they will not know precisely what they are talking about. A forum is a question posed to an audience, seeking answers. The question has to be clear if we want the spect-actors to be able to intervene and offer alternatives. If we want the forum to enrich our understanding, the central idea must be perceptible to all. Urgent matters are of prime importance because that it will inspire the spect-actors to get involved actively. Debates, the conflict of ideas, dialectics, argument and counter-argument will stimulate, arouse, enrich and prepare the spect-actors for real action in real life. Thus when the model is not urgent that is to say when it is not about having to act in reality immediately on leaving the show, finding a solution is not of prime importance. Most probably it will distract the audience’s attention and the audience will not participate or get involved at all. Even worse, the spect- actor will decide to ‘forum’ other parts of the play than those relating to the central question being asked. The issue that have been chosen too must have the element of oppression not aggression (Boal.1992:225). We have to understand the difference between oppression and aggression. As being said earlier, oppression is very often interiorized and the oppressed can still liberate themselves. Oppression is a mental and emotional state which may or may not lead to a physical

action. A person may feel oppressed but does not necessarily act against it. Aggression, however, is more often a physical manifestation. An aggressive person is often called thus as a result of his or her actions. Oppression may lead to aggression but aggression does not necessarily lead to oppression. If the model presents an aggression then the only way to solve the problem is by physical strength. That is totally against the concept of Forum Theatre to discuss, not to fight. The issue that is being presented must show that the oppressed still can have several choices of solutions.

CONCLUSIONS

In general, theatre is a powerful and efficient weapon that can be used in many ways. Theatre can be a weapon for liberation (Boal. 1979:ix). In Malaysia, people accepted the use of theatre as a medium of entertainment. What is been shown onstage however satirical will not make people angry or feel bad. The people can still smile and enjoy the play. This is the advantage that the theatre has. Theatre in Malaysia, instead of being a medium of entertainment only, can be manipulated to be used as a medium for social criticism and change. The use of Forum Theatre as a therapeutic approach for social change has never been experimented with before by any Malaysian in this country. That does not mean that it cannot be done. It should be experimented with otherwise no one will know its potential effect. Nevertheless, not every therapeutic approach is applicable for this purpose. A proper research is needed. Hopefully the approach can be used as an alternative method to cope with the invisible oppression which has bound the Malays especially the Malay adolescents for centuries. However, it cannot be said that the constructed approach used in this research will be fixed, more experiment will have to be conducted. Nevertheless, the approach constructed in this research can be used as a stepping stone in establishing a more appropriate forum approach that is suitable for the Malaysian context.

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